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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [OSCE](#) [KCFE](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: SOVA: THE GOODWILL IS GONE

Classified By: Ambassador Michael D. Kirby for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: At a November 13 meeting we had requested to discuss the Moldovan decree on vehicle registration, Minister for Reintegration Sova lost no time in expressing his ire at Transnistrian "foreign minister" Litskai. Litskai had agreed to meet Sova by November 10, but instead had avoiding the meeting, and had not responded to Sova's written invitation. To make matters worse, in Sova's view, Litskai went to Abkhazia and issued statements about Moldova's aggressive occupation. Sova was angry and disillusioned. Sova did, however, appreciate the problems created by the GOM's vehicle-registration decree, and promised to work to change the aspects of this decree that had so angered Tiraspol. End Summary.

Disillusioned by the TN Negotiator Litskai

¶2. (C) Amidst the promising atmosphere of the October informal 5 plus 2 gathering in Odessa, Sova and Litskai had agreed to meet by November 10. However, this bilateral meeting failed to take place in the promised timeframe. Sova explained to the Ambassador that he had sent a letter to Litskai proposing a meeting on November 9, and then another offering to meet on November 12. Litskai went to Moscow and has yet to respond to Sova's letters. Sova was angry about Litskai's inconsistencies. He was irked that, after the positive atmospherics in Odessa, Litskai went to Abkhazia and issued statements about Moldovan aggression, calling the Moldovans occupiers. Sova now did not want to talk to Litskai, and said he was even considering ending all contact with Litskai and working only with others.

¶3. (C) Sova noted with interest that in Odessa, when Litskai spoke about being ready to negotiate, even on demilitarization, Russian 5 plus 2 negotiator Nesterushkin had nearly fainted. Now Litskai's behavior, Sova stated, had changed completely. Sova confirmed that the ultimate goal of the seven working groups was not just economic cooperation, but early steps towards a political settlement. Without movement towards a political resolution, we should expect any cooperation to come to a halt. (Comment: While Sova and the GOM have every reason to be unhappy with Litskai, post has no doubt that Sova will maintain contact with Litskai. End Comment.)

Erratic Transnistrian Behavior

¶4. (C) Sova speculated that TN behavior was erratic because the leadership did not know what was going on and were unsure where Russia stood. Indeed, according to Sova Tiraspol officials were now concerned that some kind of deal would be made behind their backs. For that matter, Sova was also unclear where his own government stood on TN, as he had received no read out on last week's Voronin-Zubakov meeting. The Ambassador commented that he had requested a meeting with

Voronin to learn more about the meeting with Zubakov. (Note: See septel for the DCM's readout on the meeting from presidential advisor Tkaciuk. End Note.)

¶15. (C) The Ambassador noted that we were also getting inconsistent signals from the Transnistrian side and that no one should be surprised by that fact. On Friday November 9, when the Ambassador met with Shevchuk, we had no problem crossing the TN checkpoints, while on November 13 a USAID official was turned back. (Note: Subsequently we learned that the TN Ministry of Health dropped the ball on internal TN procedures for the travel. End Note.)

Vehicle Registration Decree Needs to be Changed

¶16. (C) The Ambassador and Minister Sova had a long, productive conversation on the unhelpful GOM decision on vehicle registration. Sova was unhappy with the way the decision was taken (without his Ministry) and agreed that he would need to work to change those aspects of the decree that had so angered Tiraspol. When the Ambassador raised the 2001 Smirnov-Voronin protocol on recognizing each others' vehicle registration and drivers' licenses, Sova said that agreement was no longer germane.

¶17. (C) The suggestions Sova made for improving the decree aimed at the heart of the complaints that we heard last Friday from Shevchuk and would do much to rectify the situation. Sova said he would propose removing the clause barring TN vehicles from traveling outside of Moldova as of January 1, 2008, and remove the clause banning circulation of cars with TN plates from driving throughout Moldova. On some issues, such as Tiraspol's registering 7-10 year-old cars and Chisinau residents driving TN-registered cars, the GOM would

CHISINAU 00001366 002 OF 002

not back down. Some processes would, Sova said, be mandatory for people who live on the right bank and voluntary for those from the left bank.

¶18. (C) Sova said he had already spoken to the Prime Minister and was assured a say in revising the decision. (Note: This decision appears to have been the brain child of Minister of Information Development Molojen. Molojen lately has come up with a number of unhelpful initiatives which raise money but anger various groups, such as the need for importers of beverages to have special, costly stickers affixed to their product. End Note.)

Comment: Two Steps Forward, How Many Steps Backward?

¶19. (C) After the heady optimism of the past few weeks following President Voronin's confidence-building proposals, GOM officials have taken a huge step backward. GOM willingness to modify the vehicle-registration decree could help defuse the situation on the left bank. Separately both Shevchuk and Smirnov have made comments that they will refrain from anti-right bank measures until the proposed vehicle-registration decree comes into force. Similarly, if Litskai were to sit down with Sova in a constructive mode, that, too, could mollify the right bank. In the meantime, we are facing an erosion of the recent goodwill.

KIRBY